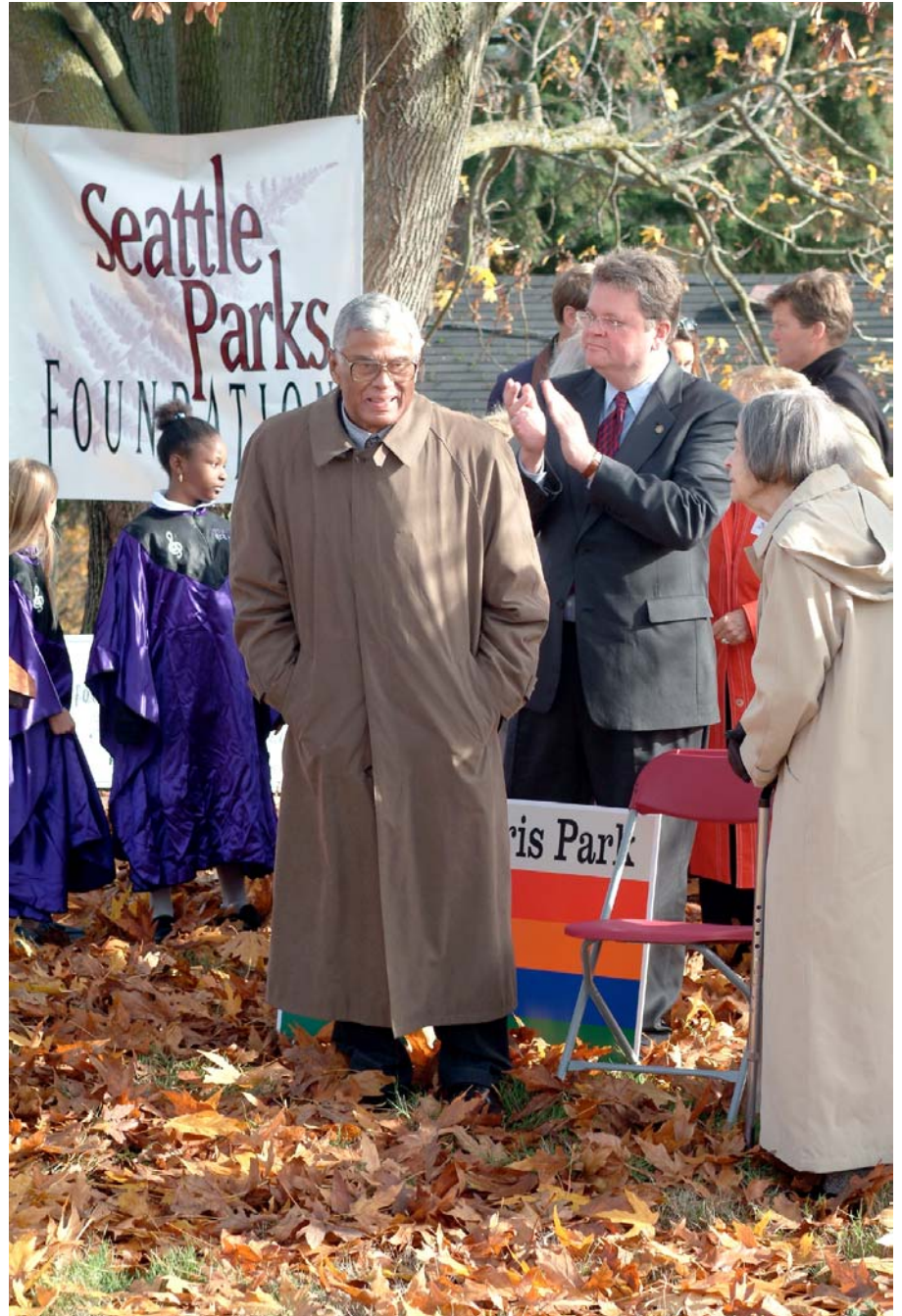


Who Is Homer Harris?

Dr. Homer Harris, for whom the park is named, is one of Seattle's most respected athletes and physicians. Homer E. Harris's grandparents arrived in Seattle in the 1890's. His mother was born here in 1894. Following the example of his family, Harris has been a pioneer for much of his life.



He's a superstar even today

Homer Harris is one of the most remarkable men in Seattle. He is not a hero, he is a renaissance man, he's a superstar even today.

King County Executive Ron Sims

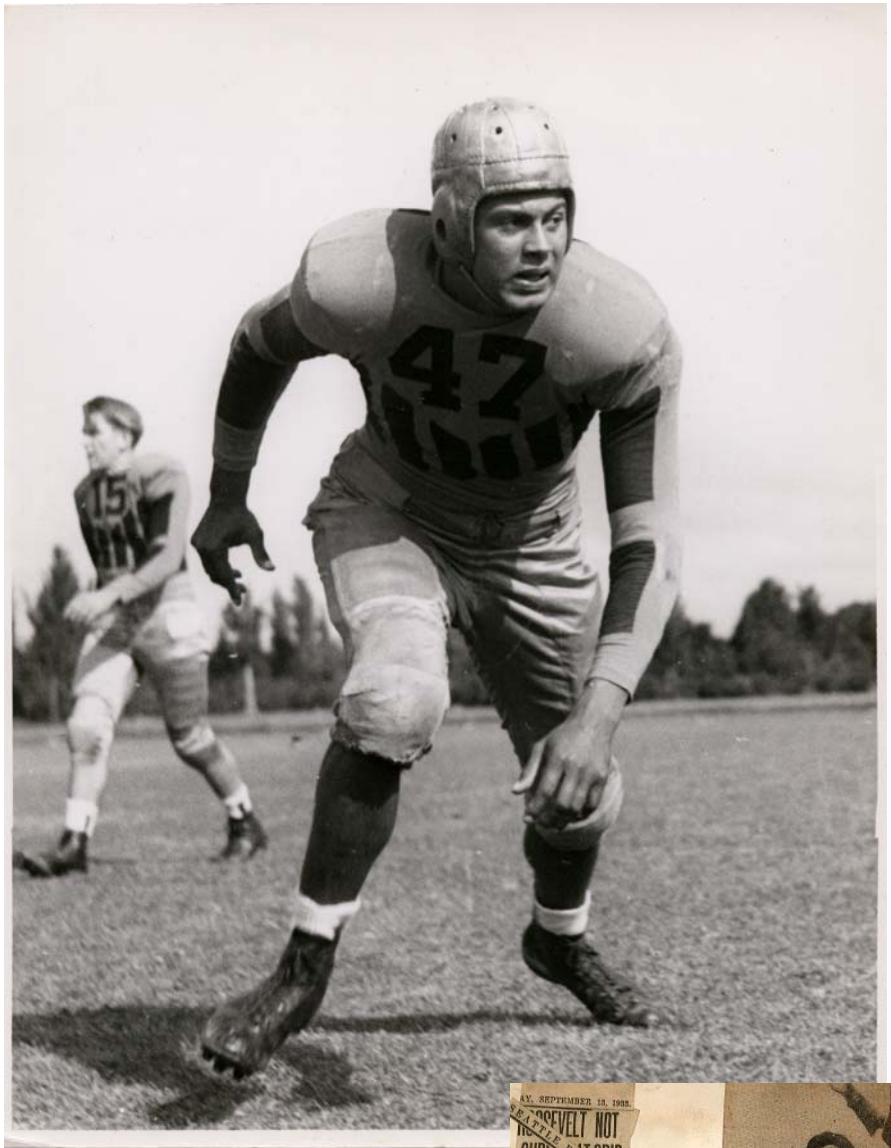
He was always a special hero of mine.

Homer does not talk readily about old times. He is a contemporary man, respected and successful, and his thoughts are on today, and on the future.

He was always a special hero of mine. You see, Homer, being black, was one of the Jackie Robinsons of this world. A trailblazer, a pioneer, although he might flinch at the thought of it ...

Homer predated Robinson by two years. Homer's game was football, and he was a great, smashing, pass-catching end for Garfield High School ...

This kid, one of many who played at Garfield, was so good, so outstanding, that even an all-white athletic program like Washington's felt it had to make at least a token try to recruit him. It was a given, in that era of race relations, that blacks didn't go to Washington. Emmett Watson, The Seattle Times



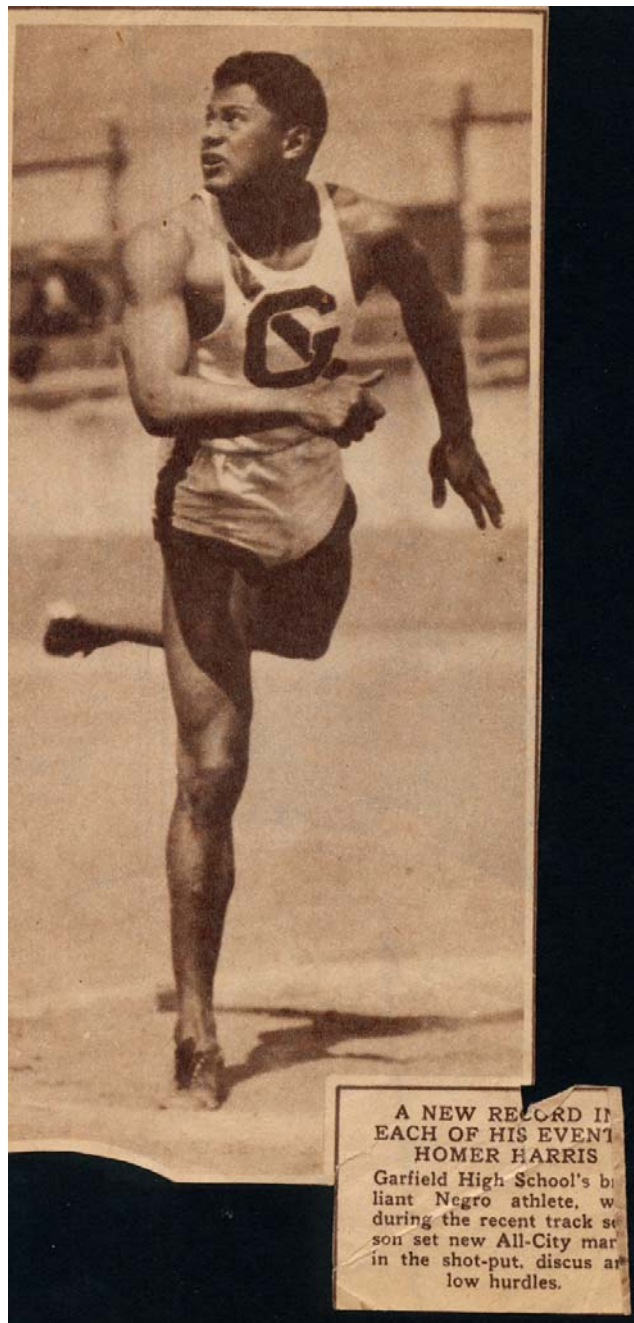
*Inspire dreams,
encourage persistence
and fulfill potentials
If it lives up to the legacy of the main
after which a future park is being
named, an empty piece of land in the
middle of Seattle's Central District
will inspire dreams, encourage
persistence and fulfill potentials.
Arturo Santiago, King 5 News*





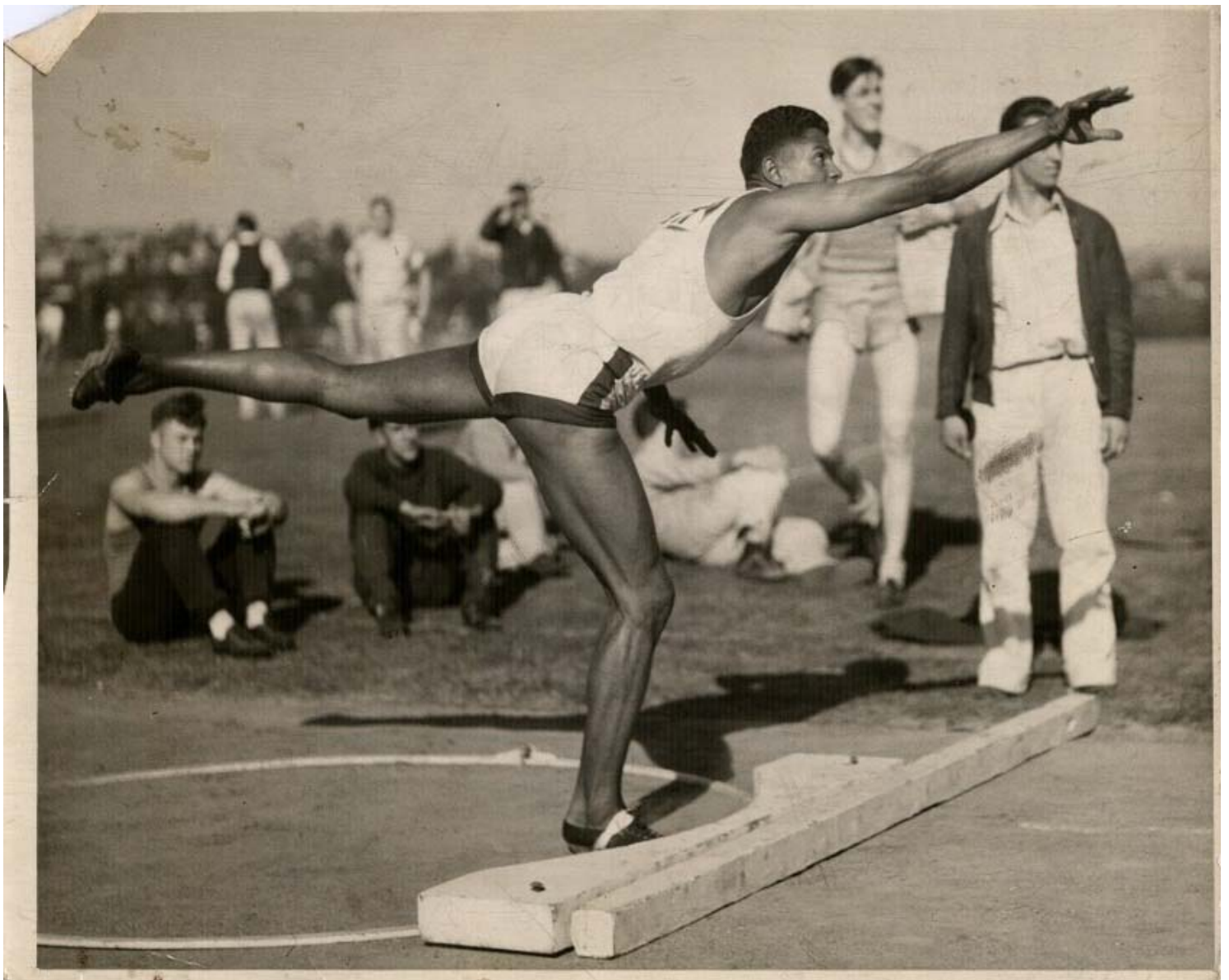
November 13, 2002 was declared Dr. Homer Harris Day in Washington State. In 2002, Harris was inducted into the Iowa Athletic Hall of Fame.

The City of Seattle bestows an honor on itself to make this the Homer Harris Park. Stim Bullitt, friend of Homer Harris for 65 years.



Homer really was a pioneer. It says a lot about him that his mates chose him to be their leader. Les Steenlage, Executive Director of the National Iowa Varsity Club

Homer Harris was the only son of Homer Eugene Harris Sr. and Mattie Vinyerd Harris. Harris grew up playing football, baseball and soccer in the fields of the Washington Park Arboretum and swimming in Lake Washington. A gifted athlete, Harris was unanimously elected by his teammates as the first black captain of Garfield High School's football team in 1933.





Of all the great athletes he produced, Homer clearly was his favorite

We talked for a while about Leon Brigham, the longtime coach at Garfield. “Brig did what he could,” Homer said. “He took an interest in you, visited your home. You were more than just an athlete to Brig.”

When Homer paused, as though wishing to talk about something else, I remembered visiting with Brigham one time. Of all the great athletes he produced, Homer clearly was his favorite.

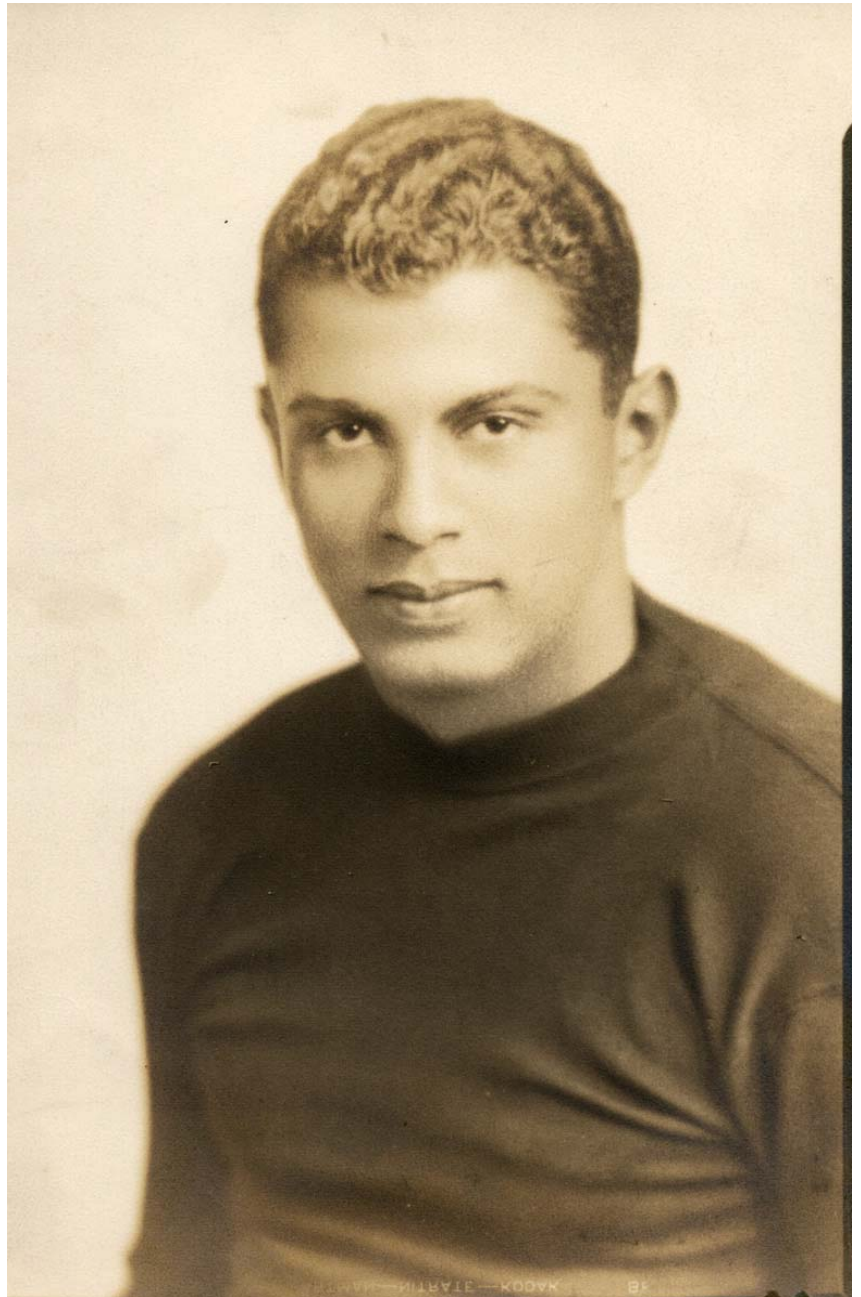
Once, Brig related, an edict came down from the Seattle school authorities that athletic captains could not be elected by players; they must be picked by the coach.

“So I asked for a vote from the players, just to give me guidance,” Brig said. “The whole squad voted. I counted 47 pieces of paper. Every one of those slips had the name ‘Homer Harris’ on it – all except one.

“That was Homer’s own slip of paper. He wouldn’t vote for himself.” Emmett Watson, [The Seattle Times](#)

Harris was also a track star who set records in the shot, discus and hurdle events. Discouraged from applying to the University of Washington because of his color, Harris went to the University of Iowa. At the University of Iowa, Harris became an All-American end and was voted not only captain of the football team by his teammates, but most inspirational as well. Harris was the first black captain in any sport in Big 10 history. He considered playing professional football, but in 1933 the NFL banned African American players from the league.

If that little park is going to live up to the man, it will need some really good planning. Otherwise, the city may have to come back and supersize it.
Seattle P-I editorial



They were embarrassed at having a black captain

As his excellence predominated at Iowa, Homer's teammates elected him captain of the Hawkeyes. It was a short-lived moment of triumph.

"One of the assistant coaches – I can't remember his name – took me aside for a talk," Homer said. "He said it would be a nice idea if I would decline the honor. They were embarrassed at having a black captain.

"I said, 'No, my teammates elected me. I am not going to give up this honor.' That's the way it ended." ...

None of us, those of white skin in America, can know quite what it must have been like to grow up the way kids like Homer had to grow up.

The awful dailiness of the humiliations ... the demeaning indignities. Being young and full of hope, having dreams of glory, recognition, success, striving to excel in a society where a majority of its people considered you inferior, even subhuman. Emmett Watson, *The Seattle Times*

*Homer's mother called him Doc,
and she told him that if he didn't want to go to medical school, that was
fine, but then she was going to have to help some other boy do it. So, as
you know, he did it and he was pretty darn good at it too.
Charlie Russell, Homer Harris' lifelong friend.*



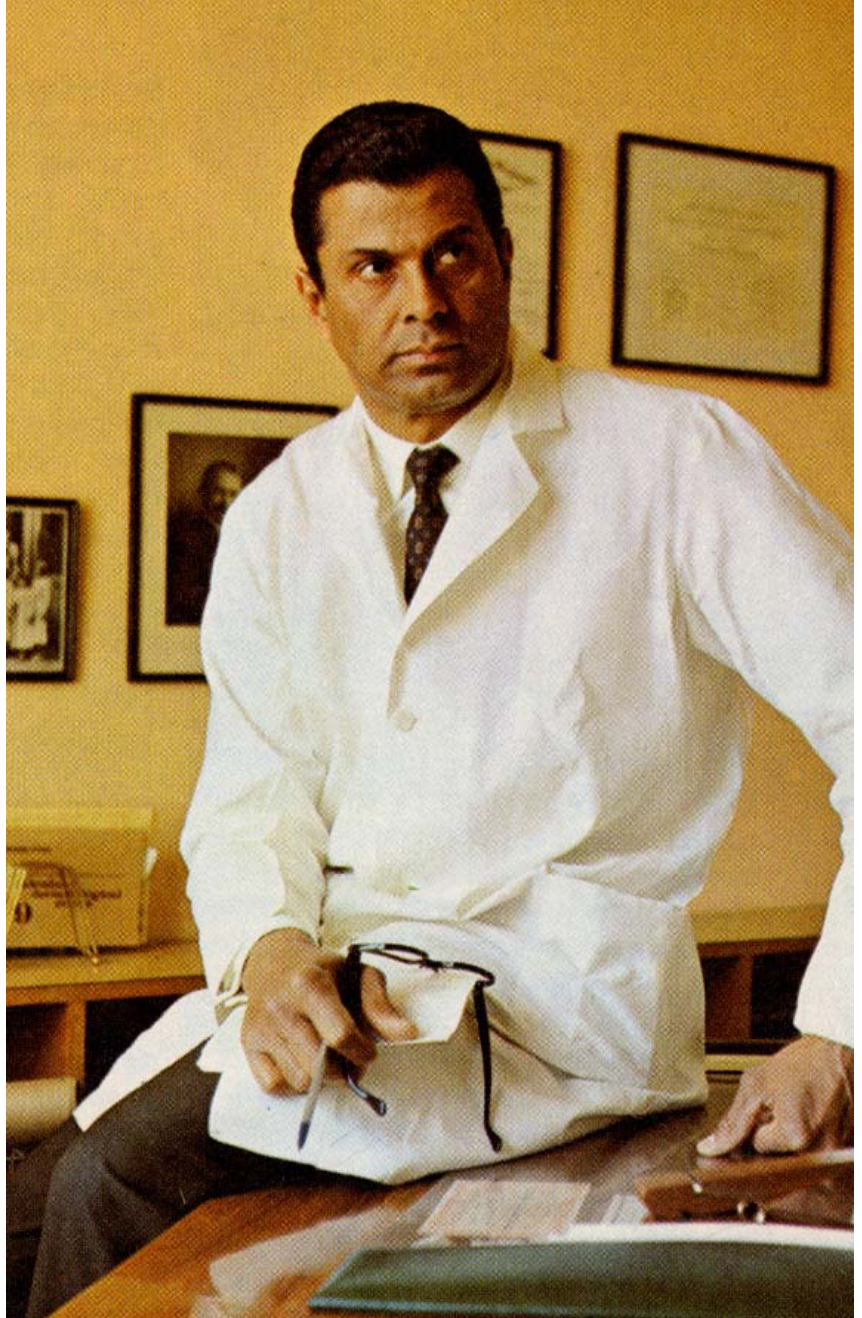
Barred from playing professional football, Harris elected to attend medical school. He returned to Seattle and quickly became one of the city's most prominent and beloved doctors, specializing in dermatology.

Homer Harris went to Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee and then joined the Army. After World War II, he did a residency in dermatology at the University of Illinois and finally returned to Seattle where he set up practice.

I will be eternally grateful to Dr. Harris for his words and his expertise in healing my skin and my soul.

I just learned on Saturday that there is a park being dedicated to Dr. Homer Harris. I am simply delighted to hear this. This man instilled hope in every patient that he ever had and has left a legacy beyond any word description. This man's genuine concern for my well being changed my life. It was in the late 70's that I first became his patient. I cannot even tell you what was wrong with me but at the conclusion of our appointment, Dr. Harris started to turn away and walk out of the office when he turned back to me, gave me a tender smile, reached out and gently touched the cheek of my face with the tips of his fingers and said, "we're going to take good care of this beautiful face." I had never had anyone speak to me so kindly or sincerely in my life. I knew when I left his office that he truly cared about my well being and that I would be okay. It was truly one of those life changing moments. I will be eternally grateful to Dr. Harris for his words and his expertise in healing my skin and my soul.

*Ellen Neel, Executive Assistant to the President,
Marguerite Casey Foundation*



Inclusion and acknowledgement are the keys.

Let us keep in mind Homer Harris Park is a tremendous opportunity to bridge the racial and socio-economic discord in the Central Area. An opportunity for people from all spectrums of life to work together on a project that honors an African American and is of benefit to all, spiritually, educationally and historically. Inclusion and acknowledgement are the keys. Adrienne Bailey, Director, Seattle Central Community College Community Outreach Partnership Center

This is a man who is really something else. It is nice of the city to give him flowers while he is still alive. Thurston Muskelly, Central Area District Council

From my point of view, this recognition is something long overdue. Homer Harris is a role model. He has influenced generations of men, especially African-American men. Carver Gayton, Central Area pioneer and activist





Dr. Harris has said that sports were a tool he used to get ahead in the world: sports led him to an athletic scholarship at Iowa, a stint in the Army, and eventually to medical school. Dr. Harris retired his dermatology practice after 43 years and currently lives on Queen Anne Hill with Dorothy, his wife of 53 years.